

Why Do We Need The Independent Review Panel?

Government alone can not hold itself accountable. Citizen oversight that is independent and free of conflicts of interest is a good way to accomplish constructive change. Committed volunteers, known for high integrity, listen to the people, review how they are being served and recommend actions to help restore right relations and trust. Citizen participation is essential to build a more peaceful and just community. The IRP was created for **external fact-finding and dispute resolution purposes**.

Whose Side Is The Panel On?

The Panel members are open to evidence from all sides and seek the truth. They are advocates for the greater good and not for one side or the other. Complainant satisfaction is not assured because Panel members base their recommendations on objective review of the evidence available.

Can The IRP Help County Departments Prevent Complaints?

Yes, IRP staff provide training in complaint prevention skills and are also available to help departments improve complaint procedures based on Panel review and recommendations.

Who Created The Panel?

The Independent Review Panel was created by the Board of County Commissioners to promote confidence in county government and improve community relations. The Panel serves as a go-between you and county government when **serious complaints** are made against Miami-Dade departments or employees.

How Is Fairness Secured?

The Panel operates **independently** of the county government administration and is dedicated to being unbiased and thorough in its review of citizens' complaints. The Executive Director is appointed by the Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit. The Panel is made up of volunteers nominated by different community organizations who listen, review and recommend corrective action.

Who Appoints The Members of The Panel?

Five Panel members are appointed by the county commission having been nominated by these organizations:

- Community Action Agency
- Community Relations Board
- Dade County Association of Chiefs of Police
- Dade County Bar Association
- Dade County League of Women Voters

Another four members are appointed by the Panel, considering ethnocultural and gender community representation.



Alex Penelas
Mayor

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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District 10

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District 5

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District 11

Rebeca Sosa
District 6

José "Pepe" Diaz
District 12

Natacha Seijas
District 13

George M. Burgess
County Manager

Harvey Ruvin
Clerk of Courts

Robert A. Ginsburg
County Attorney

Miami-Dade County provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

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Citizens Guide to County Accountability

An INFORMATIONAL Service of the

Independent Review Panel

Dr. Eduardo I. Diaz, Executive Director
140 West Flagler Street, Suite 1101
Miami, FL 33130

**Raise Voices to Help Create
Future Solutions Now**

To Resolve Serious Complaints You May Use:

- Political Action
 - Legal Action
 - Administrative Action
- or
- Public Hearing Action

The Independent Review Panel is the path to choose if you want citizen oversight of the process and want the results determined in the open by public hearing action.

What Is A Serious Complaint?

Information that pertains to substantial and specific damage to public health, safety or welfare

or

Information alleging :

- gross mismanagement
- malfeasance (misconduct or wrongdoing)
- misfeasance (failure to take action)
- gross neglect of duty

The Panel gives priority to complaints that are likely to result in corrective action that may significantly improve County service to the public.

Call 305-375-4880
Fax 305-375-4879

How Are Complaints Handled?

You can make a complaint to Panel staff by phone, letter or in person. Complaints which require a formal investigation are referred to the director of the accused department.

The accused department conducts the investigation and reports its written findings to Panel staff. This report is shared with you. If you are not satisfied with the department's investigation, a committee, made up of Panel staff and a Panel member, is formed.

The committee meets with you and representatives from the accused department. It makes recommendations to the Panel at its monthly public hearing.

The Panel publicly reviews how the complaint has been handled to make sure the citizen has had the chance to be heard. The Panel has the final word on recommendations, which are then sent to the accused department, County Manager, commissioners and the Executive Mayor.

Can Complaints Be Filed Via The Internet?

Email: IRP@co.miami-dade.fl.us

or

Visit the County's Web Page

<http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/irp>

What Can The Panel Do?

The Panel provides safe mediated dispute resolution by:

- Review of complaints and the departmental response
- Conducting face to face mediations employing constructive conflict strategies
- Holding open public hearings to address citizen complaints

The Panel may also do fact-finding by:

- Independent community inquiry
- Independent studies of grievances
- Conducting an Independent Community Grievance Conference

The Panel can recommend that:

- Corrective action be taken
- An employee be disciplined or commended
- Departmental or County policies and procedures be revised

What About City Complaints?

The Panel process is available free of charge to any Dade municipality that wants to use it. The municipality must grant the Panel jurisdiction to provide citizen oversight. The Panel does have jurisdiction to address County government complaints.

Panel staff will tell you where to go to complain about state, federal or other government wrongdoing. Other avenues are also available to address elected officials.

What Should I Know If I Want To Blow The Whistle On County Wrongdoing

The Panel is also charged with hearing retaliation complaints. Subpoenas may be issued to obtain the attendance of witnesses and the production of records. To protect yourself from retaliation by a County employee, department or instrumentality (contracted agent):

- A recent Ordinance 96-41 says you must inform the County Manager or other authority, in writing, that you have been the subject of retaliation within 60 days of it happening
- If the Public Hearing results in Panel findings that retaliation probably took place, you may be eligible for monetary reward if your whistle-blowing led to recovery of County funds
- If the Panel finds that your retaliation complaint was frivolous (not serious), you may be held responsible for County incurred costs.

Can County Employees File Complaints against Supervisors or Coworkers through the IRP?

The IRP will not duplicate or intervene in county, departmental or union grievance procedures. The IRP only considers personnel complaints in rare cases of substantial inequity or unfairness.